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Message Text

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USIA-12 AID-20 SR-02 ORM-03 T-03 ACDA-19 GAC-01 /162 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ AB: DMCOCHRAN/ NEA: AHMEYER: PD
3/20/73 EXT:22441
APPROVED BY N A/ PAB: LBLAINGEN
NEA: AMB. MEYER (DRAFT)
---------- 105224
R 202239 Z MAR 73
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 051288

E. O. 11652 - GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PK, BG, IN
SUBJ: PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR ON RECOGNITION AND WAR CRIMES

1. SUMMARY: PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR SULTAN KHAN CALLED ON AMBASSADOR MEYER MARCH 16 TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS FOR PAKISTAN IN RECOGNITION OF BANGLADESH AND PROBLEM CREATED BY WAR CRIMES TRIALS THREATENED BY BANGLADESH. RE LATTER, HE REQUESTED U. S. USE INFLUENCE WITH BANGLADESH TO WARN LATTER OF DANGER TO PEACE- MAKING WHICH WAR CRIMES TRIALS WILL POSE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE COURSE OF HIS CONVERSATION, SULTAN KHAN STATED THAT PROBLEMS POSED FOR PAKISTAN ATTENDANT TO RECOGNITION OF BANGLADESH FIGURED IN MEETING BETWEEN SECRETARY AND GOVERNOR KHAR (SEE STATE 44799) AND THAT ASSISTANT
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SECRETARY SISCO HAD SUGGESTED THAT PAKISTAN CONSIDER A SCENARIO INVOLVING A PHASED APPROACH. SULTAN KHAN SAID THAT WHILE PAKISTAN MIGHT BE PREPARED CONSIDER SUCH A STEP, PARTICULARLY AFTER NEW CONSTITUTION ADOPTED IN LATE APRIL, IT CONTINUES ENTERTAIN SERIOUS RESERVATIONS RE-GARDING INDIAN AND BANGLADESHI INTENTIONS- NOTING THAT RECOGNITION SEEMS BE POPULARLY SEEN AS MERE PRECONDITION TO RELEASE OF POWS, HE STRESSED THAT INDIANS CONTEND RECOGNITION WILL ONLY " FACILITATE" RELEASE, LEAVING PAKISTANIS CONCLUDE THAT INDIANS EITHER WILL DEMAND SOME-THING FURTHER FROM PAKISTAN FOR REPATRIATION OR ARE SIGNALING THEIR INABILITY DELIVER BANGLADESHIS.

3. WHATEVER INDIAN PROBLEMS MAY BE, SAID SULTAN KHAN, BANGLADESHIS ARE CENTRAL TO REPATRIATION SOLUTION. IN STANCE PARALLEL TO THAT OF INDIANS, BANGLADESHIS ASSERT THEY CANNOT " DISCUSS" ISSUE UNTIL RECOGNITION OCCURS; IN ABSENCE OF UNDERTAKING TO ACT, PAKISTAN SEES RECOGNITION AS PRECONDITION ONLY TO TALKS WHICH MAY RESOLVE NOTHING. MOREOVER, IN LIGHT RECENT BANGLADESH ELECTIONS, PAKISTANIS FEAR SHEIKH MUJIB LIKELY PROVE MORE INTRACTABLE THAN EVER. ELECTION SWEEP IN 1970 MADE HIM RIGID; RECENT VICTORY LIKELY MAKE HIM EVEN MORE INTRANSIGENT. SHEIKH NOW HAS NO RPT NO INCENTIVE TAKE ACTION ON REPATRIATION IN LIGHT OF ELECTION. AS RESULT, IMPASSE MAY WELL DEEPEN.

4. SULTAN KHAN THEN STATED THAT PAKISTAN HAS HEARD THAT WAR CRIMES TRIALS ABOUT TO BEGIN. ACCORDING THESE REPORTS, A JUDGE HAS BEEN APPOINTED AND CHARGES HAVE BEEN LAID AGAINST 250 PERSONS. PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR SAID THAT IF RECOGNITION/ REPATRIATION DILEMMA SLOWS PEACE- MAKING PROCESS, WAR CRIMES TRIALS WILL THREATEN VITALITY OF SIMLA PROCESS. GOP FEARS THAT IF TRIALS BEGIN, PUBLIC REACTION IN PAKISTAN, AND ESPECIALLY IN PUNJAB, WILL BE INTENSELY ADVERSE. STRENGTH OF FEELING EXPECTED BE SUCH THAT GOP' S FREEDOM OF ACTION MOVE ON RECOGNITION WILL BE SEVERELY CURTAILED. MOREOVER, FURTHER PARTICIPATION IN SIMLA PROCESS WOULD BE THREATENED. LASTLY, THERE REASON TO FEAR THAT SAFETY OF BENGALIS IN PAKISTAN WILL BE JEOPARD-IZED, PARTICULARLY SINCE NOT RPT NOT ALL SEQUESTERED BUT RATHER MOST LIVING IN SCATTERED AREAS OF PAKISTAN.

5. CONCLUDING HIS REMARKS ON PEACE- MAKING DIFFICULTIES,
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SULTAN KHAN REQUESTED THAT USG USE ITS INFLUENCE WITH

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BOTH GOI AND BOC TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON REPATRIATION
SO THAT PAKISTAN CAN MOVE TOWARD RECOGNITION. HE ALSO
ASKED THAT USG CONVEY TO BDG DEEP CONCERN WHICH WAR CRIMES
TRIAL WILL CAUSE PAKISTAN AND THREAT THEY WILL POSE TO
RESOLUTION OF LARGER ISSUES.

6. DURING COURSE OF CONVERSATION, AMBASSADOR MEYER SAID
HE BEEN IMPRESSED BY SINCERITY WITH WHICH REPRESENTATIVES
OF ALL THREE SUB- CONTINENT COUNTRIES AVOW THEIR DESIRES
TO SEE RECONCILIATION OF DIFFERENCES AND NORMALIZATION
OF RELATIONS. LIKE PAKISTANIS, OTHERS HAVE THEIR COM-
PLAINTS OF FRUSTRATION, E. G. INDIANS OVER BHUTTO' S
ALLEGED RENEGING ON SIMLA PROMISE THAT RECOGNITION OF BDG
WOULD OCCUR WITHIN TWO MONTHS, AND BDG RE REFERENCE
IN NEW PAKISTANI CONSTITUTION TO RETURN OF EAST WING. YET
PAKS SAY THEY READY TO EXTEND RECOGNITION AND RELEASE
DETAINED BENGALIS. INDIANS SAY GOI HAS NO DESIRE IN-
DEFINITELY TO RETAIN BURDENSOME 90000 POWS, BUT THAT

BANGLADESH CONCURRENCE IS ESSENTIAL. BDG SAYS IT IS
PREPARED TO MOVE ON POW RELEASE SUBJECT TO WAR CRIMES
TRIALS, WHICH EVEN PAKS APPEAR NOT TO EXCLUDE.

7. THUS SCENARIO OF TYPE MENTIONED BY SISCO SHOULD BE
POSSIBLE. USG WITH REASON DOES NOT WISH TO GET IN THE
MIDDLE BUT PERHAPS OTHER FRIENDS MIGHT HELP FIND THE KEY,
E. G. INDONESIA, IRAN, BRITAIN OR UN. AMBASSADOR MEYER
CONJECTURED WHETHER USEFUL DISCUSSION BETWEEN AMBASSADOR
KHAN HIMSELF AND HIS FORMER COLLEAGUE THE NEW BDG
AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON SHOULD BE RULED OUT. IMPORTANT
THING HE STRESSED IS TO QUIT LOOKING BACKWARD AND FOCUS
ATTENTION ON THE FUTURE. WITH BDG ELECTIONS OVER, HE
SAID, TIME FOR STATESMANSHIP IS AT HAND.

8. RE AMBASSADOR KHAN' S SPECIAL REQUEST RE IMMINENCE OF
POW TRIALS BY BDG, AMBASSADOR MEYER EXPRESSED UNDERSTAND-
ING HOW THIS COULD EXCITE EMOTIONS IN PAKISTAN, NOTED HIS
IMPRESSION THAT BDG HAS BEEN STEADILY PROCEEDING WITH
INVESTIGATIVE PROCESSES, AND SAID WHETHER THERE ANYTHING
USG COULD USEFULLY DO IS QUESTIONABLE BUT WOULD BE STUDIED.
AMBASSADOR KHAN ACKNOWLEDGED GOP ASKING NUMBER OF FRIENDLY
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COUNTRIES FOR HELP. ROGERS

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a
*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: worrelsw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE051288
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DMCOCHRAN/ NEA: AHMEYER: PD
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SECSTATE WASHDC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730332/aaaaiach.tel
Line Count: 169
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: worrelsw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26-Jul-2001 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <24-Aug-2001 by worrelsw>
Review Markings:

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EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 971215
Subject: PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR ON RECOGNITION AND WAR CRIMES
TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN, PK
To: ISLAMABAD INFO DACCA
LONDON
MULTIPLE
NEW DELHI
Type: TE
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